

# The Ways of the New World

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FRANZ was a sturdy lad of good German stock, and he had the pluck that comes of pure blood, yet he was forced to confess that the future looked extremely black when he found himself utterly alone and friendless in New York on the first day of his arrival. Aside from the dreadful noise, the bewildering confusion, the frantic haste and rudeness of the people, he had a private cause for fearing the great city. He had no money, not a single penny, and he had always been told that something in one's pocket was more absolutely essential to one's existence in New York than anywhere else in the world.

They sent people home again if they were caught without money, he had heard, and that would be a bitter experience for a boy who had come to make his fortune. It would be gross injustice also, for he was not a pauper. He had brought capital to the new world amounting to more than a thousand marks in clean white currency. It was neatly stowed away inside a money belt around the waist of Wilhelm Muller, who was Franz's only near relative and who had come with him to this country.

So the money was all right. It was safe as a church, but Uncle Wilhelm was lost. What could have become of him?

He had left Franz sitting on a bench in Battery park and had gone to have a glass of beer with a red faced man whose acquaintance he had made on the ferryboat coming across from Hoboken.

Franz sat on the bench and turned his back to the bay. He had seen enough water in the last week and naturally found the tall buildings more interesting. By and by he began to feel the machinery of the ship that had brought him over the ocean throbbing in that wooden bench. This phenomenon was at first mysterious and then distressing. Franz's stomach protested against it, and the boy was compelled to walk about.

He felt so much better afoot that he walked too far and could not find his way back to the bench where his uncle had left him. It seemed that this park, though so small, was a very confusing place, and yet if he and his uncle should walk about there looking for each other they must meet eventually. So Franz tramped and tramped until the clock on the square red tower had measured the flight of two hours.

He was then quite sure that Uncle Wilhelm was not in the park. He therefore accosted a man in a blue uniform and began to state the case to him, but the individual in blue could not understand German and clearly regarded the matter as none of his business. But another man who had been strolling along behind Franz for several minutes stepped up to him at this juncture.

"That isn't a policeman," said he in German. "That's a conductor of a car. If you want to go to the station house I'll show you the way."

Franz thought that the man was very obliging, but he proved to be somewhat too inquisitive. They had no sooner started off together than he began to question the boy about his money. Franz dared not say that he had none left he should be sent back to Germany, and so he assured the kind stranger that he had a thousand marks.

"I hope you keep it in a safe place," said his acquaintance. "There are a great many thieves in this city."

"It is in a money belt," replied Franz, whereat the stranger slapped him on the back and said that he was a clever boy.

They walked quite a long way, but did not reach the police station. Meanwhile the stranger repeatedly urged Franz to have some beer and was very much offended at his persistent refusal. This was very queer, but another feature of the case was much more extraordinary. The stranger always asked Franz to drink in the same bar.

Although this proceeding savored of evil, it excited Franz's curiosity much more than his alarm. The stranger was a lean, limp, puny man, and Franz had no fear of him. So upon a sudden impulse the boy said: "Very well. We will go in."

They entered, and the stranger ordered two glasses of beer. Just as they were set upon the bar at the rear of the saloon, where there was the least light, Franz felt a quick tap on his back. He was far from suspecting that the man beside him had reached around and tapped him on the far shoulder with the end of a stick, but such was the case. The boy turned and saw no one. Naturally he was surprised and stood staring at a partition which was the nearest object within range. Meanwhile the stranger deftly drugged the glass of beer.

At that moment, however, a door in the partition was opened, giving a glimpse of a room with tables and chairs. In a corner of this room sat Uncle Wilhelm with the red faced man whom he had met on the pier.

Franz passed the door before it could close upon the spring that controlled its hinges and he seized Uncle Wilhelm by his two hands. Muller sat back in his chair and gaped at his nephew.

"Da," said he. "da."

And it was nearly a minute before he could ask how the boy had come there.

"I was looking for the police station," said Franz, whereat Uncle Wilhelm stared harder and his mouth opened wider.

"So," said he, "so. What for?"

At this Franz narrated his adventures and his uncle seemed considerably relieved. Meanwhile the man who had guided Franz to this place entered the back room and stood by the door, glowering. Presently the red faced man got up and spoke to him. They seemed to know each other quite well, but they had a silent, surly manner and reminded Franz of two dogs that growl softly, but will not fight.

They spoke in English, and the boy, who had become somewhat accustomed to the sound of that language, caught a few words that meant very little to him. He made out, however, that the red faced man wanted the other to go away and that he refused some proposition, the nature of which was a complete mystery. One meaningless phrase from this conversation stuck in Franz's mind. It was, "No Peter in mine." The absurdity of it was attractive, like a riddle. It was the red faced man who spoke the words, and he shook his head decisively. If Franz had known that "Peter" is a mixture of deadly poisons used by thieves to stupefy their intended victims he would have been even more deeply impressed by that sentence of jargon.

The red faced man returned to the table, and the other went away angry. At Uncle Wilhelm's invitation Franz ate a sandwich and drank a glass of beer, and then he leaned back in a corner and fell into a light sleep, but whenever either of the two men stirred he opened his eyes and always found Uncle Wilhelm looking at him.

By and by a bullet headed man with a stupid countenance joined the party and was introduced to Uncle Wilhelm by the name of Weber. It appeared presently that Mr. Weber was going to Germany on a steamer that sailed early on the following day. He did not look like a German and spoke the language very badly, so Franz was not surprised to hear that he had been born in America and had never been across the water. It appeared that he had made a little money in a gold mine and was going to Germany to claim a small inheritance.

He asked some stupid questions about Germany which amused Franz, and finally he spoke of money. He had just come from the west, and all his money was in American gold coin. Some one had told him that he ought to change it for German money.

"I want to have plenty with me," he said. "German money is in marks. How many do I get for \$2,000?"

"Two thousand marks, of course," said the red faced man, gripping Uncle Wilhelm's leg under the shelter of the table. "A mark is a dollar."

"Of course," said Mr. Weber, as if his intelligence had been insulted, "but don't you have to pay something to get it changed?"

"You do at the bank," said the red faced man, "but if you could find some German just over from the fatherland he would be glad to change your money and charge you nothing."

"I have 2,000 marks," said Uncle Wilhelm in a tone of suppressed eagerness. And, hearing this, Franz sat up straight and opened his eyes wide.

He knew the relative value of American and German money and was well aware that a dollar is worth more than 4 marks, so that Mr. Weber would lose not less than \$1,500 by the proposed transaction.

"Why, uncle"—he began. But at this moment Mr. Weber saw some one whom he knew in the outer room and hurriedly went out, saying that he would come back directly.

Uncle Wilhelm turned toward Franz in a black rage.

"You keep still," he said. "This is none of your business. In this country they do these things. Everybody cheats everybody else. That is why they are so rich."

Franz was not in the least afraid, and certainly his view of this affair was not altered by his uncle's remark.

"I won't let you do this," said he stubbornly.

"The boy is right!" exclaimed the red faced man. "It wouldn't be honest. I was only joking anyhow. I'll take Weber to the bank and see that he gets his money changed all right. You wait for me in my room." And he pointed toward the ceiling. "I'll get the key for you."

Franz was well satisfied to be alone with his uncle and have a straightforward talk. His mind was beginning to be very uneasy. He remembered that Uncle Wilhelm did not enjoy a very good reputation for honesty at home, though he himself had never believed any of the stories. In view of what had happened that morning—the mysterious disappearance of his uncle and the plot to rob Weber—his thousand marks might be safer in his own pocket than in Uncle Wilhelm's money belt, so when the red faced man came back with the key Franz followed his uncle readily.

They ascended two flights of dark stairs, and then Muller opened a door. Franz stepped into a small, unsavory room, and the next instant the door was locked behind him.

The boy was momentarily bewil-

dered. Then he sprang to the door and shook and kicked it, but it was too strong for him. He heard a chuckling laugh and then the sound of Muller's steps on the creaking boards of the hall.

Franz tried the door again and then ran to the single small window. It opened on a little hole in the midst of the buildings. It was possible that an outcry might bring help, but the boy preferred to help himself if he could. He did some rapid thinking. Then he stepped to the side of the unclean bed that was in the room and dragged off the covers, which he proceeded to tear



THE TWO FELL IN A HEAP.

into strips. To these he recklessly intrusted his mortal part, and they did not fall him. He reached the bottom of the shaft safely, climbed into the basement of the hotel and eventually emerged upon the street.

One of the first objects which met his gaze as he came out into daylight was the broad back of Mr. Weber. That individual was walking rapidly away. Clearly the fraud had already been perpetrated upon him.

Franz overtook him at the corner of the street and laid a hand upon his arm.

"Come back with me!" he cried. "You have been cheated!"

Weber looked at him for a moment in blank surprise. Then he suddenly seized the boy by the back of the neck and threw him headlong against the swinging doors of a barroom. Franz landed flat on his face on the floor.

He bounced up like a rubber ball, and he was the "maddest" Teuton that ever came out of Germany. It seemed to him that he flew after Weber without the necessity of touching the sidewalk. He caught him around the neck from behind, and the two fell in a heap.

His vengeance was only beginning, however, when he was suddenly pulled to his feet by an enormous man dressed in blue and carrying a club.

"What's the matter?" demanded this formidable creature and then repeated the question in German.

Franz hardly knew what to say. He could not shake himself free of all loyalty to his uncle and openly denounce him as a thief.

"I was trying to do this man a favor," said he. "There has been a mistake. He has changed American gold for German marks."

Before he could speak another word the giant seized him and Weber, one in each hand, and whisked them through a door. It was done as rapidly as magic, and they were in a small room alone.

"Now, Dutchy," said the big man, addressing Weber with great earnestness, "speak up. What was it—gold plated nickels with the 'cents' rubbed off?"

Weber nodded sullenly.

"Was it your money?" demanded the officer, pointing at Franz with his club.

"My uncle's," replied the boy.

"Well, you take it and give it back to him and say nothing. Understand? You'll get into trouble if you talk too much in this country. Tell that to your uncle. Tell him he'll go to jail if he talks. Now, Dutchy"—to Weber—"yield up."

Weber, with a groan, drew 2,000 marks in bills from his pocket and gave them to Franz.

"This is the best I can do for you, Dutchy," said the officer. "I won't make you any trouble. Now run along."

Weber lost no time in making his exit. Franz, under the policeman's guidance, returned to the thief's resort where Weber and his pal had perpetrated the confidence game upon Uncle Wilhelm.

But Franz did not find his uncle. He has not found him yet, though these events happened some years ago. Uncle Wilhelm skipped to South America, carrying with him his nephew's thousand marks and a bag containing a large number of American five cent pieces thinly coated with gold and without the word "cents" which usually appears under the V.

That is how Franz Muller doubled his money on his first experience of the ways of the new world.

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